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inconsistent, adj. and n.

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Pronunciation: /ɪnkən'sɪstənt/

Forms: Also 16–17 -ant.

Etymology: < [IN- prefix](#) + [CONSISTENT adj.](#); compare modern French *inconsistant*.

A. adj. Not consistent.

I.

1. Of a substance: Without consistence or firmness, of incoherent nature. *rare. arch.*

1677 N. GREW *Solution of Salts* ii. §10 If the Particles of Water were themselves Fluid or Inconsistent and Alterable.

1718 J. CHAMBERLAYNE tr. B. Nieuwentijdt *Relig. Philosopher* 1. xii. x. 207 The whole Matter [is] so soft and inconsistent, that it can hardly bear touching with the Hands.

1860 J. RUSKIN *Mod. Painters* V. 159 The parts of a crystal are consistent, but of dust, inconsistent.

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II.

2. Not consisting; not agreeing in substance, spirit, or form; not in keeping; not consonant or in accordance; at variance, discordant, incompatible, incongruous.

a. Said of one thing in relation to another; const. *with*, rarely *to*.

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1646 SIR T. BROWNE *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* i. viii. 30 It containeth impossibilities and things inconsistent with trut'.

1664 *Rec. Colony Rhode Island* (1857) II. 64 Whether ther be any lawes that are inconsistent to the present government.

1729 Bp. J. BUTLER *15 Serm.* (ed. 2) ix. 165 Resentment is not inconsistent with Good-will.

1836 J. GILBERT *Christian Atonem.* viii. 358 The benevolence of God..is not inconsistent with his determination to punish.

1870 W. S. JEVONS *Elem. Lessons Logic* i. 76 The proposition, A, then, is inconsistent with both E and O.

1880 S. HAUGHTON *Six Lect. Phys. al Geogr.* iii. 163 (note), Three combinations..give results inconsistent with the others.

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b. Said of two or more things, in relation to each other.

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1656 J. BRAMHALL *Replic. to Bishop of Chalcedon* v. 227 Thus he confoundeth Papall and Patriarchall Power, making things inconsistent to be one and the same thing.

1657 O. CROMWELL *Speech* 21 Apr. in *Writings & Speeches* (1947) IV. 490 And it is a pitiful fancy...to think they are inconsistent. They may consist.

a1704 J. LOCKE *Posthumous Wks.* (1706) 179 Can the same unextended indivisible Substance have different, nay inconsistent and opposite Modifications at the same time?

1857 F. D. MAURICE *Epist. St. John* xv. 247 Are these two passages inconsistent?

1875 ABP. W. THOMSON *Outl. Laws of Thought* (new ed.) §124. 256 Two or more inconsistent views..may be formed at the same time.

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†c. Applied to a benefice incapable of being held together with a fellowship. *Obs.* [Thesaurus »](#) [Categories »](#)

1690 N. LUTTRELL *Diary* in *Brief Hist. Relation State Affairs* (1857) II. 85 Dr. Hern..having a liveing at St. Anns in Westminster, the bishop declared it inconsistent with his fellowship.

1691 *Case of Exeter-Coll.* 51 The Statutes of Exeter-College..would very imprudently have made that distinction betwixt Benefices consistent and inconsistent.

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3. Wanting in harmony between its different parts or elements; self-contradictory; involving inconsistency. Said of a single thing, or of action including two or more courses.

1651 R. BAXTER *Plain Script. Proof* 277 For his humanity to reign actually, and to suffer at the same time, is inconsistent.

1658 J. BRAMHALL *Consecr. Bps.* vi. 134 It had deserved more credit then this silly, improbable, inconsistent Relation.

1774 J. BRYANT *New Syst.* i. 306 All which in time..gave rise to a most inconsistent system of Polytheism.

1856 J. A. FROUDE *Hist. Eng.* (1858) II. ix. 340 The language of the Roman see had been inconsistent, but the actions of it had been always uniform.

1860 ABP. W. THOMSON *Outl. Laws of Thought* (ed. 5) §84. 150 Inconsistent opposition lies between any two affirmative judgments which cannot be correct together, but may be false together.

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4. Of a person: Not consistent in thought or action.

a. Const. *with*, †rarely *to* (oneself, one's principles, etc.). [Thesaurus »](#)

1709 J. STRYPE *Ann. Reformation* viii. 114 Many of these accused them to the Queen..as Men that were inconsistent to themselves.

1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 7. 1 Man is a Creature very inconsistent with himself.

1771 'JUNIUS' *Stat Nominis Umbra* (1772) II. xlvi. 181 You..are inconsistent with your own principles.

1887 T. FOWLER *Elem. Deduct. Logic* (ed. 9) Examples 174 You are inconsistent with yourself.

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b. *absol.* Acting in a way at variance with one's professed principles, or with one's conduct at another time.

1742 E. YOUNG *Complaint* II. 113 Ah! how unjust to nature, and himself, Is thoughtless, thankless, inconsistent man!

a1863 R. WHATELY *Misc. Remains* (1864) 99 A man is..properly called inconsistent whose opinions or practices are at any one time at variance with each other; in short, who holds at once a proposition and its contradictory.

1875 B. JOWETT tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) IV. 11 Nor..in speaking of God both in the masculine and neuter gender, did he [Plato] seem to himself inconsistent.

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B. n. (pl.)

Things, statements, etc. which are inconsistent with each other or with something else.

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1652 J. GAULE *Πνευματικα* 147 Necessity and contingency have alwayes been held as contraries and inconsistents.

1655 T. FULLER *Church-hist. Brit.* I. 10 As for other inconsistents with truth..they prove not that this whole Story should be refused, but refined.

1864 F. C. BOWEN *Treat. Logic* vi. 169 Two Inconsistents..cannot both be true.

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